

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6631

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0098

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, SF, WA

SUBJ: NAMIBIA - LEAKS ON LATEST MEETINGS AND SAG STATEMENT

1. THE MORNING AFTER THE CAPE TOWN FIVE MEETING WITH BOTHA ON JAN 23, S.A. PRESS CARRIED EXTENSIVE DETAILS ON THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEW YORK TALKS. CAPE TOWN'S AFRIKAANS DAILY DIE BURGER QUOTING "WESTERN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES" REPORTED THAT A FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL MEETING HAD BEEN PROPOSED ON THE CONDITION THAT S.A. WOULD NOT ANNOUNCE AN ELECTION DATE FOR SWA PRIOR TO THE TALKS. DIE BURGER, THE CAPE TIMES AND OTHER PAPERS REPORTED DETAILS INCLUDING THE FACT THAT FOURIE WOULD MEET WITH THE CONTACT GROUP IN NEW YORK ON FEB 8 AND 9, AND THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTERS WOULD MEET ON FEB 10 AND 11.

2. THE MORING PAPERS ALSO CONTINUED TO REPEAT THE LINE
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CARRIED IN THE SA PRESS OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS THAT THE WESTERN INITIATIVE WAS LAUNCHED BY BRITIAN AND FRANCE TO "SAVE THE TALKS FROM COLLAPSE" AND "OVERCOME FRICTION BETWEEN THE SOUTH AFRICANS AND THE AMERICAN NEGOTIATING TEAM LED BY MR. DON MCHENRY". THE AFTERNOON ARGUS, HOWEVER, HEADLINED A STATEMENT BY SECRETARY VANCE PROVIDED "THROUGH A STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN" THAT

AMBASSADOR MCHENRY ENJOYED THE FULL CONFIDENCE OF THE SECRETARY AND THE US ADMINISTRATION. THE ARTICLE ALSO QUOTED "SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT SOURCES" AS SAYING THAT "SOULD THE TALKS IN FACT TAKE PLACE AT THE FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL -- AND THERE WAS SOME DOUBT AS TO WHETHER THIS WOULD HAPPEN -- AMBASSADOR MCHENRY WOULD MOST CERTAINLY BE AT MR. VANCE'S ELBOW".

3. THESE DEPT "SOURCES" WERE ALSO QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE SECRETARY WAS AWARE OF THE SOURCES OF THE NEWSPAPER REPORTS ALLEGING THAT AMB MCHENRY WAS BEING REPLACED AND "REGARDS THEM IN A MOST SERIOUS LIGHT". THE ARTICLE REPORTED AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES AS SUGGESTING THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS MOUNTING A "DELIBERATE CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT AMB MCHENRY --- PERHAPS IN PREPARATION FOR RENEGING ON THE LATEST PROPOSALS".

4. THE AFTERNOON PAPERS ALSO FRONT-PAGED A STATEMENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA DENYING THAT THE SAG BELIEVED THAT AMB MCHENRY'S REPLACEMENT WOULD FACILITATE ACHIEVEMENT OF A SOLUTION. BOTHA ASSERTED THAT IT WOULD BE "COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE EVEN TO SUGGEST" THAT DECISIONS "MORE FAVORABLE TO SOUTH AFRICA COULD BE ACHIEVED BY ENDEAVORING TO SHORT-CIRCUIT AN INCUMBENT IN SUCH AN IMPORTANT POST AS THE ONE HELD BY MR. MCHENRY". FULL TEXT OF BOTHA'S STATEMENT
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REPORTED BY SEPTTEL.

5. COMMENT: I DO NOT BELIEVE THE LEAKS OF THE JAN 23 MEETING ORIGINATED WITH MY WESTERN COLLEAGUES. I HAVE CHECKED EACH AND THEY REASSURE ME THEY HAVE OBSERVED STRICTEST CONFIDENTIALITY. THE ACCURACY AND DETAIL OF WHAT APPEARED IN THE PRESS TODAY SUGGEST THAT THE GOVT CONTINUES TO PASS OUT THE INFORMATION TO DRAMATIZE WHAT IT WANTS TO EMPHASIZE. IT IS EXPLOITING THE NEWS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL MEETING AS A REFLECTION OF THE IMPORTANCE AND STATUS ACCORDED SOUTH AFRICA DESPITE INCREASING MOVES TO ISOLATE THE SAG IN WORLD AFFAIRS. IGNORING SOUTH AFRICA'S PRE-APARTHEID ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS, SOME OBSERVERS HAVE SAID THAT THE NEW YORK TALKS WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN WHICH SAG HAS EVER PARTICIPATED. AT THE SAME TIME THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST MCHENRY CONTINUES, ALTHOUGH THE DEPT'S STRONG REACTION HAS COUNTERED THIS SCURRILOUS CANNARD. THE PRESS REPORTS HERE HAVE DOWNPLAYED THE FACT THAT SWAPO WILL RECEIVE EQUAL STATUS AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE TALKS.

BOTHA'S RAPID AND EXTENSIVE RESPONSE TO THE REPORTS
FROM WASHINGTON ABOUT THE PRESS ALLEGATIONS REGARDING
MCHENRY, REFLECTS ACUTE SENSITIVITY AND AN AWARENESS
THAT SO STRONG A REBUTTAL MUST NOT BE LEFT UN-
CHALLENGED IN THE PUBLIC MIND.
BOWDLER

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